

Comments received from Wilton Rd Coach & Bus Parking Survey

During July 2010 a survey was carried out to ask bus and coach drivers their comments on Wilton Rd as a bus and coach park. Over 250 companies were given the questionnaire though the response was low – 14 replies to date.

One of the questions in the survey was **“If a charge was made of between £10 & £15 per visit for parking, what effect would this have on your business?”**

A selection of comments received

“We would not promote Melton as a destination”.

“I just wanted to say, as a group organiser, how disturbed I am at the proposals. I am never quite sure why councils discourage tourists, when quite often their economy is helped by the visits. I like many other GTO's, I can understand parking fees but not for dropping off. Do you still want visitors to come to your town?”

“There are many market towns like Melton who want to promote visitors and do not pass on charges for parking to their visitors as they are spending money with traders within the town”.

“Generally charging for coach parking is a very negative approach, as coaches are bringing you volume business. It can also be a problem for coach drivers to carry £10-£20 in coins every day whilst on tour!! Charging to a coach driver says go away, we don't want you! Free parking near the town centre with easy access and toilet facilities says welcome, we appreciate your visit”

“I wouldn't use the place”.

“I would park elsewhere this price compares to London prices and would take trade away from the town”.

“It would stop me using the car park completely and we would drop off and collect passengers on Sherrard St and areas that would cause gridlock around Melton”.

“We would recommend our passengers to go elsewhere for their day trip”.

“We find that the market is a great draw for the town and we bring in a good number of passengers, if the charge is too high we will offer alternative destinations. We would also like 2 months notice of any charges to be introduced”.

“If we have to pay then facilities such as toilets, shelters and tourist information should be available”.

“In comparison to other towns this is very expensive. For example Chesterfield has a coach station with drivers room and refreshments and there is no charge, all they would ask is that people visit the town”.

Comments from Sullivan Bus & Coach company

“We undertake occasional day excursions/private hires to Melton Mowbray – on the last visit we brought 70 passengers in a double decker. In practical terms such a charge would mean that we would need one more passenger to make the trip viable.

Whilst parking charges would not rule out future visits there is a vast choice of places to visit. Whilst the key drivers for our choice of places to visit will remain the attractions and facilities for passengers and the actual availability of coach parking, the cost of such parking would be a factor in my consideration as to whether we would include Melton in our itinerary.

A charge of £10-£15 would put Melton in line with some, but by no means, all major tourist towns and cities (which with, due respect Melton isn't). In my view, such a charge would be out of step with most towns offering a similar amount of attractions and facilities.

In my experience where such high charges have been applied there is a significant reduction in use of the coach park, with both bus and coach operators finding parking elsewhere, often at out of town bus stops, lay-bys and especially at weekends - industrial estates.

A charge of about £6 for all day parking and either free (preferably) or perhaps up to a maximum of £3 for regular local market day services that stay up to 3 hours would probably not impact on other than the most marginal of regular services. Anymore than this could be the difference between more of them continuing to run.

Members need to take into account that such services are dependent on payments through the national concessionary pass scheme so any reduction in payments to operators on this scheme coupled with parking charges could seriously jeopardise the existence of some regular services.

Reductions in passengers would reduce trade in the town, probably hitting market traders first. Reduction in the size of the market (one of Melton's main attractions) would make it less attractive to coach passengers leading to an eventual reduction in the number of excursions.

To make comparisons is difficult because every town is different. Stamford charges £10 for coach parking, but local operators and services generally don't

use the facility. Moreton-in- Marsh provides free parking (I believe by the market operator) for both local market day services and for coaches on day excursions. Moreton has over 50 visiting buses and coaches each Tuesday, and there is less in the town than in Melton. Maldon in Essex used to have a number of coaches visit regularly, especially on market day. It may just be coincidence but when they introduced significantly higher coach parking charges, not only did the number of coaches using the facility decline (the cost is now £12 per day and is rarely used at all), but at the same time the market went into decline and now only has one or two stalls. I am certain there are other factors involved here other than coach parking charges, but it does serve as a warning that the Council needs to get the balance right”

There was one coach driver who agreed with the introduction of charges. “when I met with MMBC in May 2010, they didn’t know that Melton was the only place that I’d heard of the was free parking, the possible revenue is about £20k”